

INTRODUCTION

The *Oral Health U.S., 2002* annual report is produced by the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Division of Oral Health, in conjunction with NGIT Health Solutions and Services. *Oral Health in America: A Report of the Surgeon General* established the importance of oral health to the general health and well-being of all Americans. It also concluded that although good oral health is enjoyed by many Americans, numerous disparities exist among U.S. citizens in their oral health and in their access to oral health care. In order to improve the nation's health and eliminate disparities, the report called for more data on health, disease, and health care practices for the overall U.S. population as well as for subpopulations.

This annual report is the first in a series. It summarizes the current state of oral health in the United States, using recent data that in most cases are nationally representative. The goal of this report is to establish baselines, identify trends, and provide a clearer picture of the presence and magnitude of disparities in oral health status. A readily accessible summary of available oral health data should prove a valuable aid to a wide range of users, including the general public, researchers, clinicians, and policy-makers.

The format for this report includes introductory text in each section followed by graphic displays. A discussion of the sources of data and methodologies used can be found at the end of the report. Data tables are also available at the end of the report for more detailed information.

